

Coastal Program Comments
September 20, 2002

The effort to establish this program dates back to the 1970's and, indeed, this has been the third attempt. CZM was offered to more than 30 states and territories and now, I believe, all but Illinois are in the program. Why has it taken so long? I believe, because the federal requirements were not flexible enough to allow for different regional circumstances setting up, at least in Indiana's case, insurmountable obstacles for achieving local support. But enough of relating past difficulties, let us look at the present and future opportunities and concerns and let us celebrate Indiana's becoming the 34th member.

Northwest Indiana's most recent economic crisis has produced both new thinking and new activities that can lead to an improved and robust quality of life and renewal along our shoreline and in our coastal drainage basin. This coastal region remains an area with world-renowned natural resources and a history of mighty, even spectacular industrial growth. The reasons this area became an industrial colossus are the same reasons for its renewal. We are the coastal area with the nation's largest supply of surface freshwater. We sit at the hub of the nation's transportation network – ship, rail, air and road - the headwaters of the Great Lakes. We are an area that has shown that it can make products and make them well. At the same time, we are an area of natural beauty and an extraordinary natural heritage that strives to protect that heritage. We are a good place to live in and we attract folks here. Our recent efforts to reach an ever-improving balance between industry and environment and social equity concerns will serve us well as we plan for the future and Indiana's Coastal Program can play a significant role.

A basic tenet of the sustainable development efforts at work here in northwest Indiana is to consider simultaneously economic growth, environmental quality and social equity as we look at our future. In the past we have focused on economic growth activities, decided what to build and then consider the potentially limiting aspects of environmental regulations and social equity concerns. We cannot do that any longer. Indiana's Coastal Program has a role to play in these renewal efforts as a contributor to efforts at natural areas protection, restoration and expansion and efforts to expand our recreational activities. There may be other roles, however, my remarks today focus only on these roles. Among these efforts are:

- The variety of possible natural and recreational reuses of coastal lands as these lands become available.
- Brownfield redevelopment for natural and recreational reuses along the coast and elsewhere.
- Adoption of Smart Growth policies including expansion of preserved natural areas.
- Continuous general environmental quality improvement.
- Improving relations with northeastern Illinois such that the state line effectively becomes invisible and no barrier to collaborative activities at areas such as Wolf Lake and the West Branch of the Grand Calumet River.
- Continued involvement in Chicago Wilderness and its Biodiversity Recovery Plan.
- Providing both grants of funds and professional advice in the activities listed above.

Witnessing today's signing of the Indiana Coastal Program is such a personal pleasure for me. The opportunities to abandon this almost three-decade effort were many. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources has my sincere thanks for it's having "stayed-the-course" and succeeded. Thank you.

Mark Reshkin

